



Upper Mississippi River

National Wildlife and Fish Refuge

Executive Summary

Supplement to Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Comprehensive Conservation Plan

Alternative E: Modified Wildlife and Integrated Public Use

December 2005



Sandra Lines

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IN REPLY REFER TO

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge
51 E. Fourth Street - Room 101
Winona, Minnesota 55987

Dear Reader:

We are pleased to provide you this Executive Summary of Alternative E, the new preferred alternative for the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. This summary is being mailed to more than 3,000 citizens and organizations who have expressed an interest in the plan.

The Draft CCP and EIS was released for public review May 1, 2005 for a 120-day comment period ending August 31, 2005. The Refuge hosted 21 public meetings and workshops attended by 2,900 persons. The workshops resulted in 87 workgroup reports with comments or recommendations on major issues. We also received 2,438 written comments including comments from the four states involved, the Corps of Engineers, and 41 conservation or recreation-related organizations, and 6 petitions with more than 3,000 signatures. This input was used to make many changes for Alternative E.

Major changes in Alternative E compared to Alternative D include:

- Dropping 3 of 6 proposed No Hunting Zones around public use facilities
- Changes to boundaries in several proposed Waterfowl Hunting Closed Areas
- Dropping the "no fishing, no motors" provision for Closed Areas in favor of Voluntary Avoidance for large areas and No Motors and Voluntary Avoidance for small areas, with restrictions taking effect October 15 versus October 1 each year to extend fall fishing
- Dropping the 25 shotshell daily limit and 100 yard spacing regulations
- Dropping the fee managed hunt proposal for the Gibbs Lake Area of Lake Onalaska in Pool 7 in favor of devising a plan with waterfowlers
- Reducing the number of Electric Motor Areas from 17 to 6, but adding 8 Slow, No Wake Areas where from March 16 to October 31 each year watercraft must go slow and no airboats or hovercraft are permitted
- Dropping the restrictions on areas open to camping and proposed alcohol and human waste regulations, but adding a new regulation prohibiting glass containers
- Dropping the proposal for a launch fee at Refuge-administered boat ramps

We look forward to your review and comment on this new preferred alternative during the 60-day comment period. We also thank you for your continued interest in the Refuge and helping us to ensure it remains a special place for wildlife and people.

Sincerely,

Don Hultman
Refuge Manager



Sandra Lines

Where to View the Full Text of Alternative E

Like other alternatives in the Draft CCP and EIS, Alternative E contains 41 objectives. Many editorial changes have been made to reflect public and agency comment, although most substantive changes are summarized in this executive summary. You may view Alternative E in its entirety at the following locations:

- # On the Web at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/uppermiss>
- # At libraries in communities from Wabasha, Minnesota to Rock Island, Illinois
- # At Refuge Headquarters, which is located at 51 East Fourth Street, Winona, Minnesota
- # At Refuge District Offices in Winona, Minnesota; La Crosse, Wisconsin; McGregor, Iowa; and Savanna, Illinois

For assistance in locating a copy, or for additional copies of this executive summary, please call the Refuge at (507) 452-4232, or leave a message at the toll-free number (888) 291-5719.

Public Open Houses Planned

During the 60-day comment period, the Refuge will host open houses in communities up and down the 261-mile-long Refuge. The open houses will allow you to talk with Refuge staff, view large maps of Alternative E, and ask questions and provide comments on the plan. Open house dates and locations have been announced through the media and on the website for the plan.

Your Comments Welcome!

Written comments are welcome and may be submitted by mail or through our website. Mail comments to: Upper Mississippi River NW&FR, Attn: CCP Comment, Room 101, 51 East Fourth Street, Winona, MN 55987; or send an e-mail through the website <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/uppermiss>

Deadline for Comments

We welcome comments at any time. However, to consider your comment as we prepare the Final EIS and CCP, we need to receive it by February 3, 2006.

Upper Miss Refuge Draft CCP and EIS Alternative E Executive Summary



Sandra Lines

most visited refuge in the U.S. with 3.7 million annual visitors.

Introduction

A Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) is being prepared to guide the administration and management of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge (Refuge) for the next 15 years. The draft document integrates the components of a CCP, namely goals, objectives, and strategies with the requirements of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), namely alternatives and consequences. This new alternative, Alternative E: Modified Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus, is being released as a supplement to the Draft CCP and EIS that was released May 1, 2005.

CCPs are required by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 to ensure that refuges are managed in accordance with their purposes and the mission of the Refuge System, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Refuge System is the largest collection of lands and waters in the world set aside for the conservation of wildlife, with over 540 units covering more than 95 million acres in the U.S. and its territories.

The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge encompasses 240,000 acres in a more-or-less continuous stretch of 261 miles of Mississippi River floodplain in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois. The Refuge was established by Congress in 1924 to provide a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds, fish, other wildlife, and plants. The Refuge is perhaps the most important corridor of habitat in the central U.S. due to its species diversity and abundance, and is the

Following public review of Alternative E, a Final CCP and EIS will be prepared and released to the public. The Final CCP and EIS is expected to be released spring 2006. After a 30-day review period, the Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Twin Cities, Minnesota, will make a decision on which alternative in the Final EIS will become the Final CCP. This decision will be recorded in a formal Record of Decision included in the final documents. Substantive comments from the public, agencies, and other groups received during comment periods will be included or summarized in the Final EIS, along with a Service response.

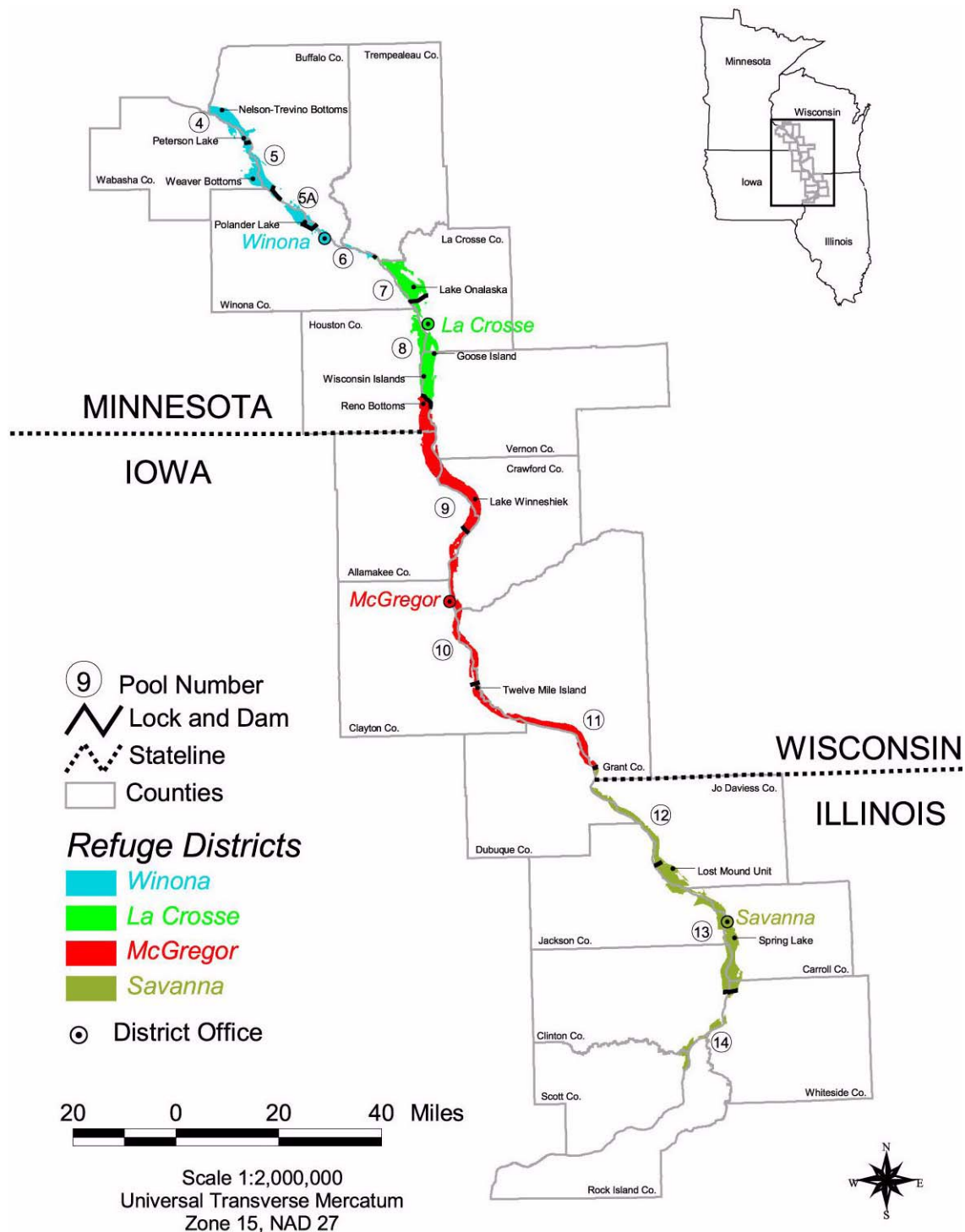
Refuge Vision and Goals

The Refuge Vision provides a simple statement of the desired, overall future condition of the Refuge. Goals provide the themes or framework for measurable objectives and strategies which are the heart of the CCP and the basic structure of the alternatives considered. The vision and goals remain unchanged by this supplement to the plan.

Refuge Vision:

The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge is beautiful, healthy, and supports abundant and diverse native fish, wildlife, and plants for the enjoyment and thoughtful use of current and future generations.

Figure 1: Location of Upper Mississippi River NW&FR



Refuge Goals:

1. *Landscape.* We will strive to maintain and improve the scenic qualities and wild character of the Upper Mississippi Refuge.
2. *Environmental Health.* We will strive to improve the environmental health of the Refuge by working with others.
3. *Wildlife and Habitat.* Our habitat management will support diverse and abundant native fish, wildlife, and plants.
4. *Wildlife-Dependent Public Use.* We will manage public use programs and facilities to ensure high quality and sustainable hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, interpretation, and environmental education opportunities for a broad cross-section of the public.
5. *Other Recreational Use.* We will provide opportunities for the public to use and enjoy the Refuge for traditional and appropriate non-wildlife-dependent recreation that is compatible with the purpose for which the Refuge was established and the mission of the Refuge System.
6. *Administration and Operations.* We will seek adequate funding, staffing, and facilities, and improve public awareness and support, to carry out the purposes, vision, goals, and objectives of the Refuge.

Summary of Alternative E Changes on Major Issues

During the public review and comment period on the Draft CCP and EIS, 9 of the 41 objectives in the plan surfaced as the most controversial. The following is a summary of how Alternative E addresses these 9 objectives. In nearly all cases, the changes reflect modifications to Alternative D, the earlier preferred alternative. The numbering system for the objectives matches the numbering found in the Draft CCP and EIS, and the tables elsewhere in this summary, for ease of tracking and comparison.

Tables and maps at the end of this document provide more details and reflect all objectives as appropriate. The full text of Alternative E covering all 41 objectives and strategies is available on the planning website for the Refuge.

4.1 General Hunting

Alternative E deletes 3 of 6 No Hunting Zones proposed in Alternative D. These areas were around proposed hiking trails. Alternative E retains three new No Hunting Areas: Sturgeon Slough (Pool 10), Goetz Island (Pool 11), and Crooked Slough (Pool 13). On other new trails, signs and public education will make the public aware that hunting and trapping may be occurring in these areas.

4.2 Waterfowl Hunting Closed Areas

Waterfowl hunting closed areas are defined as follows:

Closed areas are closed to all migratory bird hunting. Other hunting and trapping is only allowed beginning the day after the close of the regular state duck hunting season, until season closure or March 15, whichever comes first, except turkey hunting, which is allowed during state seasons.

Alternative E contains a variety of boundary changes to Waterfowl Hunting Closed Areas proposed in Alternative D (see Table 3 on page 21). These changes include modified travel corridors, deletion of closed area expansions, further adjustment to some closed area boundaries, establishing a paired closed area in Pool 10 between the Wisconsin River delta and McGregor Lake area, slightly expanding the area open to hunting next to two closed areas, and delaying implementation of the new closed area system until the 2007-08 hunting season to allow for hunter adjustment and Federal Register notice. Boundary changes are reflected on the Alternative E maps attached to this summary.





The “no fishing and no motors” regulation for Waterfowl Hunting Closed Areas is being dropped in favor of a two-tiered system of reducing disturbance to birds using the closed areas. Under Alternative E, the public will be asked to practice Voluntary Avoidance on all large closed areas (more than 1,000 acres) October 15 to the end of the respective state duck hunting season, and a no motor regulation and Voluntary Avoidance will also be in effect on small closed areas (~1,000 acres or less) October 15 to the end of the respective state duck hunting season. “No motors” means the use of motors on watercraft is not allowed. The October 15 effective date is also a change from the October 1 date proposed in Alternative D and will provide fishing opportunity during the early fall fishing season before the major influx of waterfowl.

Alternative E also calls for monitoring human disturbance in large and small closed areas, and if disturbance exceeds a threshold, the Refuge will, in coordination with other agencies, move to implement more restrictive regulations such as no motors, no fishing or no entry on an individual closed area basis. Human disturbance monitoring and research on Pools 7 and 8 suggests a reasonable threshold of 1 major disturbance per day based on a season-long average. A major disturbance is defined as a human intrusion which displaces 1,000 waterfowl or 50% of the waterfowl present, whichever is less.

4.3 Waterfowl Hunting Regulations

In Alternative E, proposed regulations requiring a daily shotshell possession limit of 25 shells while waterfowl hunting and required 100-yard spacing between hunting parties are deleted. In lieu of regulations, information and education efforts will

be used to address skybusting and quality of waterfowl hunting. This education effort will also address spent shotshell casings which present a litter problem in some areas. Alternative E retains the current 200-yard spacing requirement between boat blinds/parties in the Savanna District (Illinois side), Pools 12-14. This alternative also changes the proposed open water waterfowl hunting prohibition for portions of Pools 9 and 11 in Wisconsin to Refuge-wide regulation in the Minnesota and Wisconsin portions of the Refuge.

4.4 Firing Line, Pool 7, Lake Onalaska, Wisconsin

Alternative E deletes the proposed fee managed waterfowl hunt proposed in Alternative D. Instead, Alternative E calls for continued work with local waterfowlers and state managers and conservation officers to develop a plan to address skybusting, crippling, competition, and unsportsmanlike conduct in the Gibbs Lake area, with the plan completed by July 1, 2006.

4.5 Permanent Waterfowl Hunting Blinds, Pools 12-14, Savanna District, Illinois,

Alternative E remains the same as Alternative D calling for the phase out of permanent blinds on the Refuge in Pools 12, 13, and 14 (Savanna District) over a 3-year period. These blinds are currently not allowed on the other three districts of the Refuge.

4.9 Fishing Tournaments

Alternative E is modified slightly from Alternative D to better reflect the “one-stop-shopping” aspect of dovetailing Refuge permits with state-issued permits for fishing tournaments. Changes in wording will also emphasize the state lead in fisheries management and the use of a collaborative approach with the states, Corps of Engineers, and tournament sponsors and organizers.

5.1 Beach-related Uses

Alternative E makes several changes to the proposals in Alternative D. These changes are highlighted below:

1. Current camping area regulations remain in effect (all areas open except during the respec-

tive state waterfowl hunting season, when parties must be within sight of the main navigation channel and not in Waterfowl Hunting Closed Areas). This change is, in effect, Alternative A, No Action, for the areas of the Refuge open to camping.

2. Managers retain the latitude to modify uses or close specific areas for bona fide wildlife and human health and safety concerns. However, Alternative E clarifies coordination with the states and the Corps of Engineers and includes a provision for advance public notice.
3. The proposed new alcohol regulation in Alternative D is deleted in Alternative E since the current regulation was deemed adequate.
4. The proposed regulation requiring portable toilets or disposal kits to address human solid waste is deleted in favor of increased “Leave No Trace” education and outreach. However, a new regulation is added in Alternative E to require that human solid waste be either removed or buried on-site.
5. Based on public requests, a new regulation prohibiting the use of glass food and beverage containers on Refuge lands is added in Alternative E.
6. Retain most of the proposed camping definition from Alternative D, but add a 24-hour rule for personal property left unattended at site to address the pre-empting of camping and hunting spots. The current regulation is for 72 hours which is deemed too long for unattended property.
7. Retain “explore” user fee for camping and other beach-related uses, but add wording for inter-agency and citizen involvement when drafting any proposals. There are no plans to implement a user fee at this time, but the Refuge does not think it wise to close the door on options for revenue to help manage and maintain beach-related activities.
8. Add a new strategy for exploring an “Adopt-A-Beach” citizen-involvement program for addressing beach litter and upkeep concerns.

Alternative E retains provisions for completing Beach Management Plans for each pool in cooperation with the Corps of Engineers, states, and the public. Several edits in the main text and strategies were also made for Alternative E to reflect agency and public comment on beach management, maintenance, and planning policy.

5.2 Electric Motor Areas

Alternative E makes major changes to the 16 new Electric Motor Areas proposed in Alternative D. Alternative E retains 6 of the Electric Motor Areas identified in Alternative D and creates 8 seasonal Slow, No Wake Areas from areas identified in Alternative D. Three proposed Electric Motor Areas are deleted from any special designation. These changes are summarized below. Details on the size and location of the areas can be found in the tables and maps included in this executive summary.

Electric Motor Areas¹ (6): Island 42, Snyder, Mertes (but remove no entry overlay proposal), Browns Marsh, Hoosier Lake, Guttenberg Ponds (1,947 acres total)

Slow, No Wake Areas² (8): Nelson/Trevino, Blue Lake/Target Lake, Black River Bottoms, Root River Bottoms, Princeton, 9-Mile, Reno Bottoms, and Denzers Marsh (10,569 acres)

Deleted Areas (3): Finger Lakes, Glass Lake, Keller’s Island (1,719 acres)

6.2 Public Access Facilities

In Alternative E, the number of public access facilities proposed is similar to Alternative D. However, the boat ramp user fee for the 26 Refuge-administered boat ramps is deleted.

1. Electric Motor Area: Areas closed year-round to all motorized vehicles and watercraft except watercraft powered by electric motors or non-motorized means.

2. Slow, No Wake Area: From March 16 through October 31, Slow, No Wake for watercraft and no airboats or hovercraft allowed.

Table 1: Comparison of Alternatives D and E by Objective, Upper Mississippi River NWFR

Alternatives Issue/Objective	Alternative D: Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus	Alternative E: Modified Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus (New Preferred Alternative)
1.1 Refuge Boundary	In coordination with the Corps of Engineers, survey and post entire boundary by 2020.	In coordination with the Corps of Engineers, identify, survey, and post all areas where threat of encroachment is greatest by 2020.
1.2 Acquisition within approved boundary	Acquire from willing sellers an average of 1,000 acres per year or 15,000 acres by 2020 (58% of goal). Give highest priority to acquisition of lands and waters most important to fish and wildlife, but consider public recreation values.	Same as D
1.3 Bluffland protection	Acquire from willing sellers 13 bluffland areas within approved boundary (Winona District – 6, La Crosse District – 3, McGregor District – 4). Work with partners to leverage resources, and consider a blend of easements and fee-title acquisition.	Same as D
1.4 Research Natural Areas and Special Designations	More actively administer Natural Areas; complete management plan for each by 2010 with focus on plant and wildlife conservation. Increase effort to make public aware of values and management of Natural Areas by incorporating information in brochures, maps, and websites. Also, nominate Refuge as Wetland of International Significance under Ramsar.	Same as D
2.1 Water Quality (chemistry and sediments)	Proactive program to address water quality: priv. lands biologists watershed agreements assessments research/education support UMRBA efforts to standardize water quality criteria Address sedimentation in backwaters through EMP and other programs; ensure that fish and wildlife objectives are met while integrating public use needs such as access.	Same as D, but expand strategies, especially for sedimentation, in consultation with U.S. Geological Survey scientists and others.

Table 1: Comparison of Alternatives D and E by Objective, Upper Mississippi River NWFR (Continued)

Alternatives Issue/Objective	Alternative D: Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus	Alternative E: Modified Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus (New Preferred Alternative)
2.2 Water level management	By 2020, complete drawdowns of Refuge pools and seek establishment of Access Trust Fund so drawdowns can be accomplished as needed based on habitat conditions.	By 2020, complete as many drawdowns of Refuge pools as practicable through the interagency workgroups based on ecological need and engineering feasibility. Retain Access Trust Fund provision from Alternative D.
2.3 Invasive Plants	Complete invasive plant inventory by 2008; reduce acres affected by 10% by 2010.	Same as D, but recognize that some level of control should continue before and during inventory work.
2.4 Invasive Animals	Increase efforts to control invasive animals through active partnerships with the states and other federal agencies, and increase public awareness and prevention.	Similar to D, but strengthen the objective and strategies to highlight the seriousness and urgency of the invasive animal threat, especially in regard to asian carp species.
3.1 Environmental Pool Plans	Aggressive implementation of Pool Plans using all tools available, with 30% of the portion of the priority projects/tools within the approved refuge boundary completed by 2020.	Same as D
3.2 Guiding Principles for all habitat management programs	Adopt and begin use of guiding principles when providing input to design and construction of projects. Principles will integrate public use and aesthetic considerations with fish and wildlife needs.	Same as D, but clarify some language so that active management practices not discouraged (e.g. moist soil, water control structures) and consideration given to other agency guidelines.
3.3 Monitoring fish and wildlife populations	Increase monitoring efforts. Amend Wildlife Inventory plan by 2008 to include more species and more emphasis on habitat monitoring and research.	Same as D
3.4 Threatened and Endangered species	By 2008, begin monitoring all federally listed threatened or endangered and candidate species and prepare management plans to help recovery.	Same as D, but in strategies recognize need to monitor state-listed species in coordination with the states.
3.5 Furbearer trapping	Continue basic trapping program until refuge trapping plan, with public involvement, is updated by 2007.	Same as D, but in strategies outline trapper involvement in preparing trapping plan.

Table 1: Comparison of Alternatives D and E by Objective, Upper Mississippi River NWFR (Continued)

Alternatives Issue/Objective	Alternative D: Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus	Alternative E: Modified Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus (New Preferred Alternative)
3.6 Fishery and Mussel Management	Increase refuge involvement in fishery management by: 1. Completing by 2008 a Fishery and Mussel Management Plan which incorporates current monitoring and management by the states and other Service offices. 2. Hire a fishery biologist to facilitate state, Service, and refuge coordination.	Same as D, but change some wording in rationale and strategies to emphasize state and Corps role.
3.7 Commercial fishing and clamming	Increase refuge involvement in commercial fishing and clamming by: 1. Completing a Fishery and Mussel Management Plan (see Objective 3.6) 2. Issuing refuge special use permits in addition to state-required permits 3. Increase coordination with the states for commercial fishing activity to meet fishery objectives, especially in regards to invasive fish species (see Objectives 2.4 and 3.6)	Same as D, but change wording in item 2 to reflect “one-stop-shopping” aspect of dovetailing Refuge permit with state-issued permit. Change wording in rationale and strategies to emphasize state lead in fisheries. Emphasize collaborative approach with states and Corps. Reference commercial fishing exception to public use restrictions for Waterfowl Hunting Closed Areas and work with commercial fishermen on ways to lessen disturbance.
3.8 Turtle Management	Increase refuge involvement in turtle management by: 1. Completing a 3-5 year turtle ecology study of representative habitats of the entire refuge, and 2. Coordinating with other agencies on turtle management actions including monitoring, harvest, and limiting disturbance to nests.	Same as D
3.9 Forest Management	Increase refuge involvement in forest management by: 1. Completing, with Corps of Engineers, a forest inventory for the entire refuge. 2. Hire a refuge forester to complete a Forest Management Plan and lead an active forest management program.	Same as D, but in strategies look for ways to leverage funds to add needed seasonal forestry technician at each District in addition to refuge forester.
3.10 Grassland Management	Maintain 5,700 acres of grassland through various management tools including prescribed fire, haying, and control of invasives. Complete a stepdown Habitat Management Plan to address grassland conservation and enhancement.	Same as D.

Table 1: Comparison of Alternatives D and E by Objective, Upper Mississippi River NWFR (Continued)

Alternatives Issue/Objective	Alternative D: Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus	Alternative E: Modified Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus (New Preferred Alternative)
4.1. General Hunting	Maintain a minimum of 190,586 acres (79.5%) of land and water open to all hunting. Add 6 new No Hunting Zones for a total of 5,322 acres (13 zones total).	Maintain a minimum of 189,884 acres (79.2 %) of land and water open to all hunting. Add 3 new No Hunting Zones for a total of 3,973 acres (10 zones total).
4.2 Waterfowl hunting closed areas and sanctuaries	<p>In fall 2006:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Add 5 new Closed Areas and delete or modify the current 15 for a total of 21. 2. Add 2 new Waterfowl Sanctuaries (no entry) for a total of 3: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Pool Slough Sanctuary (McGregor District, Pool 9, Iowa/Minnesota) b. Guttenberg Ponds portion of the 12 Mile Sough Sanctuary (McGregor District, Pool 11, Iowa) c. Spring Lake Sanctuary (Savanna District, Pool 13, Illinois) 3. All Closed Areas, except on Lake Onalaska, would be closed to fishing, except bank fishing, and all motorized watercraft, from Oct. 1 to the end of the respective state regular duck season. 4. Some boundary adjustments would be made to the Lake Onalaska Closed Area. The Voluntary Avoidance Area would continue. <p>Total acres = 43,704 Closed Areas = 18 Sanctuaries = 3</p>	<p>Similar to D except would take effect in fall 2007.</p> <p>Will add 6 new closed areas and delete or modify the current 15 for a total of 22. Make some reductions to closed areas in Pools 4, 7, and 8. In Pool 10, there would be paired closed areas versus just one, with Sturgeon Slough/McGregor Lake closed from the start of the season to October 31, and Wisconsin River Delta closed Nov. 1 to end of state duck season. In Pool 11, the Bertom-McCartney Closed Area would retain current regulations in E, and a portion of the John Deere Marsh opened to hunting.</p> <p>Voluntary Avoidance on all large closed areas Oct. 15 to the end of the respective state duck season and no motors and voluntary avoidance on small closed areas (~1,000 acres) or less Oct. 15 to the end of the respective state duck season. Establish threshold for disturbance.</p> <p>Exceptions are Spring Lake (existing no-entry, Pool 13, Illinois), Pool Slough and Guttenberg Ponds (Pools 9 and 11, Iowa, no entry), Bertom/McCartney (Pool 11, Wisconsin, no changes) and Lake Onalaska (Pool 7), Wisconsin, no change.</p> <p>Total acres = 45,755 Closed Areas = 19 Sanctuaries = 3</p>

Table 1: Comparison of Alternatives D and E by Objective, Upper Mississippi River NWFR (Continued)

Alternatives Issue/Objective	Alternative D: Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus	Alternative E: Modified Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus (New Preferred Alternative)
4.3 Waterfowl hunting regulation changes: 1. hunter spacing, 2. shotshell limits, and 3. open water hunting Pools 9 and 11.	In 2006, implement new refuge-wide regulations limiting each hunter on the refuge to 25 shotshells/day during waterfowl season and a min.100 yards spacing between waterfowl hunting parties. Prohibit openwater hunting on areas of Pools 9 and 11.	Drop the proposed shell and spacing limit. In 2006, implement information and education effort to reduce hunter crowding, skybusting, and littering (shell hulls). Retain 200-yard spacing between boat blinds on Savanna District (Illinois side). In 2007, prohibit open water hunting Refuge-wide in Minnesota and Wisconsin waters versus Pools 9 and 11.
4.4 Firing Line -- Pool 7, Lake Onalaska, LaCrosse District	Establish a managed waterfowl hunting area on the north end of the Lake Onalaska Closed Area. This hunt would establish posted hunting sites and limit the number of hunters to those sites via random drawing and for-fee permits.	By July 1, 2006, complete a step-down plan for the Gibbs Lake area that addresses skybusting, crippling, competition, and unsportsmanlike conduct. Work with local waterfowlers and state managers and conservation officers to develop the plan.
4.5 Permanent hunting blinds on Savanna District	Phase-out the use of permanent hunting blinds beginning with Pool 12 after the 2006-07 season, Pool 13 after the 2007-08 season, and Pool 14 after the 2008-09 season.	Same as D
4.6 Potter's Marsh Managed Hunt - Savanna District	For 2006-07 hunting season, implement a variety of administrative changes. Permanent blinds would be eliminated after the 2007-08 season, but boat blind sites provided and managed.	Same as D
4.7 Blanding Landing Managed Hunt Program (Lost Mound Unit, Savanna District)	After the 2006-07 season, eliminate the managed hunt program, including use of permanent blinds. Open to all on first come basis.	Same as D
4.8 Fishing	Provide 110,611 acres of surface water open to year-round fishing. An additional 32,750 acres open except October 1 to the end of the state duck hunting season. Add 3 new fishing piers/docks for total of 18.	Similar to D, although change from "no fishing/no motors" in many Closed Areas to either voluntary avoidance or no motors will affect season and use (see Obj. 4.2).
4.9 Fishing Tournaments	Issue refuge special use permits for tournaments in addition to state-required permit, to minimize impact to sensitive fish, wildlife, and habitat.	Same as D, but change wording to reflect "one-stop-shopping" aspect of dovetailing Refuge permit with state-issued permit. Change wording in rationale and strategies to emphasize state lead in fisheries. Emphasize collaborative approach with states and Corps.

Table 1: Comparison of Alternatives D and E by Objective, Upper Mississippi River NWFR (Continued)

Alternatives Issue/Objective	Alternative D: Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus	Alternative E: Modified Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus (New Preferred Alternative)
4.10 Wildlife Observation and Photography	Maintain the following existing or new facilities: 26 observation areas 16 hiking trails 21 canoe trails 5 biking trails 3 auto tour routes 3 observation towers 3 photography blinds	Slight change from D as follows: 27 observation areas 15 hiking trails 19 canoe trails 6 biking trails 3 auto tour routes 3 observation towers 4 photography blinds
4.11 Interpretation and Environmental Education	Maintain 83 existing and new interpretive signs. Build 3 new District Offices and new Lost Mound office, all with visitor contact facilities. No major visitor center. Continue refuge brochure and website. Sponsor 2 major annual interpretive events and establish 1 environmental education program on each district. Add visitor services specialists to McGregor and Winona Districts, and one at the Nat'l Miss. River Museum in Dubuque.	Same as D, except maintain 102 existing and new interpretive signs.
4.12 Fish Floats	Develop new standards for fish float facilities and operations, including new concession fees, and phase out floats that can not meet those standards. Do not replace floats that are phased out, letting private sector provide alternative off refuge lands opportunities, such as commercial fishing barges not moored to refuge lands.	Same as D except solicit new proposals for any float phased out for not meeting standards, and base decision on adequacy and feasibility of proposals.
4.13 Guiding services	Provide policy and consistent process for issuing permits for hunting, fishing and wildlife observation guide services. Coordinate with the states for consistency with their permitting requirements.	Same as D, but modify language to amplify cooperation with states and Corps and "one-stop-shopping" for permits when possible.

Table 1: Comparison of Alternatives D and E by Objective, Upper Mississippi River NWFR (Continued)

Alternatives Issue/Objective	Alternative D: Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus	Alternative E: Modified Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus (New Preferred Alternative)
5.1. Beach use and maintenance policy and regulations	Open-unless-closed policy. All areas currently open to camping, boat mooring, swimming, social gatherings, picnicking and other non-wildlife-dependent uses, would remain open, except: 1) areas closed or restricted by signing to protect wildlife, habitat or the public, and 2) camping and overnight mooring limited to islands and shoreline that border the main channel, including the backside of such islands or points. Implement new regulations dealing with camping, human waste, and alcohol use. Articulate clear beach maintenance policy, and work with interagency teams to complete beach plans by pool.	Similar to D, with modifications: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Current camping area regulations remain in effect (all open, in sight of main channel and not in Closed Areas during waterfowl season). 2. Managers may close areas for bona fide wildlife and human health and safety concerns, proper coordination with states and Corps and notice to public. 3. Drop new alcohol reg., enforce current reg. 4. Drop regulation for portable toilets or disposal kits in favor of increased “Leave No Trace” education and outreach. Require that human solid waste be either removed or buried on-site in accordance with other back country public land regulations. 5. Add regulations prohibiting the use of glass food and beverage containers on Refuge lands. 6. Proposed camping definition: keep, but add a 24-hour rule for personal property left at site to address preempting camping and hunting spots. 7. Retain “explore” user fee for camping and other beach-related uses, but add wording for interagency and citizen involvement before crafting any proposal. 8. Explore “Adopt-A-Beach” program.

Table 1: Comparison of Alternatives D and E by Objective, Upper Mississippi River NWFR (Continued)

Alternatives Issue/Objective	Alternative D: Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus	Alternative E: Modified Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus (New Preferred Alternative)
<p>5.2. Electric Motor Areas</p> <p>Alt E Note: <u>Electric Motor Areas:</u> Island 42, Snyder, Mertes (but remove proposed no-entry overlay), Browns Marsh, Hoosier Lk, Guttenberg Ponds <u>Slow, No Areas:</u> Nelson/Trevino, Blue Lake/Target Lake, Black River Bottoms, Root River Bottoms, Princeton, 9-Mile, Reno Bottoms, Denzers Marsh <u>Deleted Areas:</u> Finger Lakes, Glass Lake, Keller's Island</p>	<p>Designate 16 new electric motor areas encompassing 14,498 acres. All current uses allowed, and areas open to primitive camping.</p>	<p>Designate 6 electric motor areas (5 are new, Mertes existing) encompassing 1,947 acres, and 8 Slow, No Wake areas* encompassing 10,569 acres. Delete 3 areas from any designation (1,719 acres). Remain open to camping in accordance with current regulations.</p> <p>*From March 16 through October 31, Slow, No Wake for watercraft and no airboats or hovercraft allowed.</p>
<p>5.3 Slow, No Wake Zones</p>	<p>Add 10 new Slow, No Wake zones, bringing total to 12 administered by the Refuge, and assist in enforcement of 43 others. Spring Lake: 20 mph limit Crooked Slough: Slow, No Wake.</p>	<p>Same as D with minor modifications.</p> <p>Spring Lake Sanctuary and Crooked Slough (Lost Mound): adopt Iowa regulation of under 5 mph if within 100 feet of another vessel going under 5 mph.</p>
<p>5.4. Dog use policy</p>	<p>Adopt enforceable regulation which safeguards wildlife and visitors: From March 1 to June 30, dogs must be restrained by leash or other means. At all other times, dogs can be free if 100 yards away from designated public use areas and/or other persons, and if within sight and voice control of owner/handler. No field trials or commercial training will be permitted (current policy).</p>	<p>Same as D</p>
<p>5.5. General Public Use Regulations</p>	<p>Conduct annual review, and update as needed, general public use regulations governing public entry and use of the Refuge.</p>	<p>Same as D, but add strategy for doing a Law Enforcement step-down plan for the Refuge in cooperation with the states and Corps of Engineers.</p>

Table 1: Comparison of Alternatives D and E by Objective, Upper Mississippi River NWFR (Continued)

Alternatives Issue/Objective	Alternative D: Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus	Alternative E: Modified Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus (New Preferred Alternative)
6.1 Office and shop facilities	By 2010, construct new offices and maintenance shops at Winona, La Crosse, and McGregor Districts, and expand the office and construct a new maintenance shop at Savanna District. Each office would feature a biological work area or lab, and modest visitor facilities. Refuge Headquarters would be integrated with either the Winona or La Crosse offices. By 2020, remodel or replace office and shop at the Lost Mound Unit.	Same as D
6.2 Public access facilities	Add 1 new boat access, 3 new walk-in accesses, 1 new and 1 improved canoe landings, and improve 5 parking areas. Implement launch fee for Refuge-operated boat ramps.	Same as D except no launch fee for Refuge-operated boat ramps and 1 additional walk-in access.
6.3. Operations and maintenance needs	Complete annual review of Refuge Operating Needs System (RONS), Maintenance Management System (MMS), and Service Assessment and Maintenance Management System (SAMMS) databases to ensure these reflect reflect balanced needs of wildlife and integrated public use focus alternative.	Same as D
6.4. Public information and awareness	Increase by 50 percent the current annual average of 80 media interviews, 125 news releases, and 25 special events (special programs, presentations, and displays at others' events). Add 45 kiosks. Also take advantage of technical and specialist positions added in this alternative to increase outreach.	Same as D
6.5 Staffing needs	By 2015, increase staffing from current 37 to 59 people (56.5 FTEs) to bring all Districts to minimum staffing level, add specialists to Headquarters, and increase staff at Lost Mound Unit. Priority would be a blend of wildlife & public use related positions.	Similar to D, but add 4 additional FTEs: 4 Full-time Refuge Officers based on public and agency comment. Total FTEs: 60.5.

Table 2: Summary of Project Features for Alternatives A, D and E

Feature	Existing Features		Total Proposed Features			
	Alternative A: No Action		Alt. D: Wildlife & Integrated Public Use Focus		Alt. E: Modified Wildlife & Integrated Public Use Focus (Preferred Alternative)	
	Units	Acres or Miles	Units	Acres or Miles	Units	Acres or Miles
Waterfowl Closed Areas and/or Sanctuaries	15	44,495	21	43,704	22	45,755
No open water hunting areas	0	0	2	10,487	Drop 2 areas; apply no open water hunting reg throughout MN and WI portions of the Refuge	
Managed/Special Hunts	2	2,434	2	2,403	4	2,265
Administrative no hunting zones	7	3,473	13	5,322	10	3,973
Fish catch and release area	1	700	1	700	1	700
Heron sanctuary	0	0	1	64	0	0
No Wake zones	45	NA	55	NA	58	N/A
Electric motor areas	1	222	16	14,498	6	1,947
Slow, No Wake areas	0	0	0	0	8	10,569
Research Natural Areas	4	6,946	4	6,946	4	6,946
Canoe trails	4	32.1	21	135.5	19	120.6
Hiking trails	6	20.5	17 ¹	42.4 ²	15	39.9
Auto tour routes	1	2.5	3	11.0	3	11
Biking trails	3	10.0	6 ³	21.1 ⁴	6	21.1
Fishing piers	15	NA	18	NA	18 (Drop 2, add 2)	N/A
Commercial fishing floats / piers	4	NA	4	NA	4	N/A
Boat access	26	NA	27	NA	27	N/A
Walk-in access	0	NA	3	NA	4	N/A
Canoe landing / launch	0	NA	2	NA	2	N/A
Parking lot improvements	0	NA	5	NA	5	N/A
Observation decks/areas	15	NA	26	NA	27	N/A
Observation towers	0	NA	3	NA	3 (Drop 1, add 1)	N/A
Photo blinds	0	NA	3	NA	4	N/A

Table 2: Summary of Project Features for Alternatives A, D and E (Continued)

Feature	Existing Features		Total Proposed Features			
	Alternative A: No Action		Alt. D: Wildlife & Integrated Public Use Focus		Alt. E: Modified Wildlife & Integrated Public Use Focus (Preferred Alternative)	
	Units	Acres or Miles	Units	Acres or Miles	Units	Acres or Miles
Kiosks	63	NA	108	NA	118	N/A
Interpretive signs	59	NA	83	NA	102	N/A
Entrance signs	25	NA	30	NA	30	N/A
Official Notice Boards	29	NA	30	NA	47	N/A
Build new maintenance facilities	2	NA	5	NA	5	N/A
Build new office facilities	0	NA	3	NA	3	N/A
Build major visitor center	0	NA	0	NA	0	N/A
Refuge Staffing	37.0	NA	56.5	NA	60.5	N/A

1. *Incorrectly noted in previous tables of Alternative D as 16 hiking trails.*
2. *Incorrectly noted in previous tables of Alternative D as 40.9 miles of trails.*
3. *Incorrectly noted in previous tables of Alternative D as 5 biking trails.*
4. *Incorrectly noted in previous tables of Alternative D as 14.1 miles of trails.*

**Table 3: Closed Areas and Sanctuaries / Alternative E
(Modified Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus)**

Pool	Name	State	Acres	Use Class ¹	Distance Between Areas (miles)	Up-River Mile	Down-River Mile	Comments
4	Big Lake-Buffalo Slough	WI	3,249	Large	-	759.4	754.6	Has travel corridor; voluntary avoidance (VA)
4	Rieck's Lake	WI	496	Small	0.1	755.8	755.0	Delete travel corridor; no motors, VA
5	Weaver Bottoms/ Lost Is.	MN-WI	3,693	Large	9.4	745.6	741.7	Travel corridor; VA; boundary correction to include O&M islands adds 185 acres
5	Spring Lake	WI	243	Small	0.1	741.8	740.7	No motors; VA
5A	Polander Lake	MN-WI	1,907	Large	8.9	731.8	728.4	Travel corridor; expansion of 318 acres; VA
6	Trempealeau NWR	WI	n/a	n/a	4.2	724.2	718.0	Part of existing closed area system; special regulations; 5520 acres
7	Lake Onalaska	WI	7,357	See comments	10.0	708.0	702.8	Has existing VA of 3,356 ac. No change from current regulations
8	Goose Is. No Hunt Zone	WI	975	No hunt zone; small closed area	11.6	691.2	689.8	Part of existing closed area system; has 99 acre expansion; no motors and VA; has special hunt area (235 acres) ²
8	Wisconsin Islands	MN-WI	6,510	Large	2.2	687.6	680.1	VA; adds Slow, No-Wake travel corridor on Raft Channel
9	Pool Slough	MN-IA	1,112	Sanctuary	4.9	675.2	673.0	Adjacent to state (IA) sanctuary
9	Harpers Slough	IA-WI	5,209	Large	18.2	654.8	648.0	VA
10	McGregor Lake	WI	852	Small	11.6	636.4	633.5	Special Regulations ³
10	WI River Delta	WI	1,376	Large	0.1	633.8	630.7	Special Regulations; has travel corridor ⁴
10	12-Mile Island	IA	540	Small	13.7	617.0	615.2	Pool 10 portion; no motors; VA
11	Guttenberg Ponds	IA	252	Sanctuary	0.1	615.2	613.8	Within 12-mile Island closed area
11	12-Mile Island	IA	1145	Large	0.1	615.2	611.5	Pool 11 portion of 12 Mile Island closed area; travel corridors; VA
11	Bertom McCartney	WI	2,384	See comments	7.5	604.0	598.7	No change from current regulations
11	John Deere Marsh	IA	405	Small	14.8	587.0	584.8	Travel corridor; no motors; VA

**Table 3: Closed Areas and Sanctuaries / Alternative E
(Modified Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus) (Continued)**

Pool	Name	State	Acres	Use Class ¹	Distance Between Areas (miles)	Up-River Mile	Down-River Mile	Comments
12	Kehough Slough	IL	343	Small	15.8	569.0	567.1	No motors; VA
13	Pleasant Creek	IA	2,067	Large	14.4	552.7	548.5	VA
13	Spring Lake	IL	3,686	Sanctuary	11.7	536.8	531.9	Only existing sanctuary on Refuge
13	Elk River	IA	1,237	Large	0.1	532.6	528.1	VA
14	Beaver Island	IA	717	Small	11.5	516.6	514.0	No motors; VA
Total Acres = 45,755 Total Refuge Units = 22				19 Closed Areas (40,705 acres) 3 sanctuaries (5,050 acres)				

1. *Use Class. Waterfowl hunting closed areas continue to be defined as follows: Closed areas are closed to all migratory bird hunting. Other hunting and trapping is only allowed beginning the day after the close of the regular state duck hunting season, until season closure or March 15, whichever comes first, except turkey hunting is allowed during state seasons. Under Alternative E, the public will be asked to practice Voluntary Avoidance (limiting entry) on all closed areas (“Large” and “Small”) October 15 to the end of the respective state duck hunting season and in addition there will be a “no motor” restriction on Small closed areas October 15 to the end of the regular state duck hunting season. Large closed areas are greater than 1,000 acres and small closed areas are ~1,000 acres or less. “No motors” means the use of motors on watercraft is not allowed.*

Sanctuary is defined as follows: no entry October 1 to the end of the regular state duck hunting season.

2. *Goose Island special hunt area regulations: see table of managed hunts/special hunts.*

3. *McGregor Lake “small” closed area special regulations: Closed to waterfowl hunting from the state duck opener to October 31, and during the same period the area is a no motor and Voluntary Avoidance area; beginning Nov 1 area is open to waterfowl hunting until the end of the state duck season. This is a dual function closed area paired with the Wisconsin River Delta closed area.*

4. *Wisconsin River Delta “large” closed area special regulations: Open to waterfowl hunting beginning with the state opener for the duck season through October 31, thereafter, closed to waterfowl hunting and a voluntary avoidance area until the end of the state duck hunting season. This is a dual function closed area paired with the McGregor Lake closed area.*

**Table 4: Electric Motor Areas / Slow, No-Wake Areas¹ Alternative E
(Modified Wildlife and Integrated Public Use Focus)**

Pool	Feature	State	Existing	Proposed		Up-River Mile	Down- River Mile	Distance to Landing	Change from Alternative D to Alternative E
			Alt. A Acres	Alt. D Acres	Alt. E Acres				
4	Nelson-Trevino	WI		2,626	2,626	762.5	760.0	0.1	Becomes Slow, No Wake Area
5	Finger Lakes	MN		497	0	752.7	751.5	0.2	Dropped
5	Island 42	MN		459	459	749.8	747.6	1.5	Remains electric motor area
5A	Snyder Lake	MN		182	182	735.0	734.0	2.5	Remains electric motor area
5A	Denzers Slough	MN		83	83	733.0	732.0	1.5	Becomes Slow, No Wake Area
6	Mertes Slough	WI	222	222	222	727.0	726.0	0.1	Remains electric motor area
7	Black River Bottoms	WI		1,146	1,146	711.0	708.8	0.1	Becomes Slow, No Wake Area
7	Browns Marsh	WI		966	829	711.0	708.0	0.1	Remains electric motor area; size reduced
8	Blue/Target Lake	MN		1,849	1,836	699.0	696.0	0.1	Becomes Slow, No Wake Area; size reduced
8	Root River	MN		695	695	696.0	694.0	0.5	Becomes Slow, No Wake Area
9	Reno Bottoms	MN		3,402	3,402	681.0	679.2	0.1	Becomes Slow, No Wake Area
10	Hoosier Lake (Formerly Bagley Bottoms and Glass Lake)	WI		789	162	624.8	624.0	0.1	Remains electric motor area; drop the Glass Lake section (627 acres)
11	Guttenberg Ponds	IA		93	93	614.8	614.0	0.8	Remains electric motor area
12	Nine Mile Island	IA		567	454	573.8	572.0	0.3	Becomes Slow, No Wake Area; size reduced
13	Kellers Island	IA		595	0	540.0	537.2	0.3	Dropped
14	Princeton (formerly called Rock Creek)	IA		327	327	506.7	506.0	1.3	Becomes Slow, No Wake Area
	Total Acres		222	14,498	12,516	A total of 6 Electric motor areas cover 1,947 acres.			
	Total Units		1	16	14	A total of 8 Slow, No Wake areas cover 10,569 acres.			

1. *Electric Motor Areas: Areas closed year-round to all motorized vehicles and watercraft except watercraft powered by electric motors or non-motorized means. Note: The 5 mph speed limit (Alt. D.) was dropped from the definition.*

Slow, No Wake Area: From March 16 through October 31, slow, no-wake for watercraft and no airboats or hovercraft allowed.

Acre values include both land and water located within the mapped boundary, therefore actual watercraft use areas are less than the acres shown in this table.

Table 5: Managed Hunts / Special Hunt Areas

Pool	Feature	State	Existing	Proposed		Up-River Mile	Down-River Mile	Comments
			Alt. A Acres	Alt. D Acres	Alt. E Acres			
7	Gibb's Lake Special Hunt Area	WI	0	480	See comments	708.6	707.2	By July 1, 2006, complete a step-down plan for the Gibb's Lake area.
8	Goose Island Special Hunt	WI	0	0	235	692.0	691.5	Youth Waterfowl Hunt (age 16 or younger accompanied by an adult) from duck opener to Oct. 31. No motors and voluntary avoidance Nov. 1 to end of duck season; bow and gun deer hunting allowed during state dates. Trapping permitted after duck season.
11	John Deere Marsh Special Hunt	IA	0	0	107	586.5	586.0	Walk-in hunt only; next to closed area
12	Blanding Landing Managed Hunt	IL	511	0	0	557.7	556.8	Alts. D and E the same: end managed hunt; open area to general hunting
13	Potter's Marsh Managed Hunt	IL	1,923	1,923	1,923	526.0	522.7	Alts. D and E the same: No permanent blinds; boat blinds only
Total Acres			2,434	2,403	2,265 ¹			
Total Units			2	2	4			

1. Total may change with completion of Gibb's Lake hunt plan.

Maps of Management Alternatives